

Summary of 2024 Academic Assessment Report Review

Clackamas Community College

A Report by the College's Assessment Committee and the InSS Leadership Team (Vice President and Deans)
March 11, 2025

This summary captures themes from academic assessment reports submitted by faculty at Clackamas Community College in Fall of 2024.

Background: Academic Assessment at CCC

At CCC, we use assessment in academic programs as a core component of our approach to continuous quality improvement (CQI). The academic assessment process begins with faculty teams creating a plan to explore student learning related to degree or certificate student learning outcomes and/or general education learning outcomes (student learning outcomes are statements of the skills and knowledge we intend for students to learn as a result of a program of learning). The full cycle of assessment includes multiple steps and each step requires some level of collaboration among faculty who teach in the program/area in order to be successful: develop assessment tools and processes, such as student projects that align with program-level learning outcomes; evaluate student work using rubrics or other means of measurement; discuss and make meaning of the results; determine whether the results can inform improvements to the curriculum, teaching, or other aspects of the program—or affirm that there is a need to extend the assessment effort if additional data is needed; make a plan to implement any changes; implement those changes; and re-assess the learning outcomes at a later date to determine if the changes resulted in improvements. The assessment reporting cycle was annual from 2016-2024 and has now shifted to two years. The next reports will next be collected in Fall of 2026.

Reading and Discussion of Reports

A group made up of the College's Assessment Committee and the College's Instruction and Student Services Leadership Team (Vice President and Deans) read and discussed assessment reports from the most recent assessment reporting cycle. The College's Assessment Coordinator assigned each reader a sample of assessment reports (10-11 per person) so that each report was read by multiple readers (including at least one faculty member and one administrator). Readers were asked to respond to a set of reflection questions about strengths, gaps, or challenges observed in reports. In addition, they were asked questions about how assessment themes could inform high-level college planning efforts and potential improvements to assessment processes.

Audience and Distribution

This summary of assessment reports will be made available to the full College community, with some additional effort made to share with leaders and participants in major planning and resource allocation processes. Academic Assessment represents one of the most significant ways that we engage in continuous learning about the effectiveness of our approach to being a College. In sharing these themes, our goal is to ensure that we use this learning when establishing priorities, preserving focus, and supporting improvement over time.

Report Review: Common Strengths

Report readers noted strengths that were common among academic assessment reports. Multiple reports described how collaboration both within and between programs/areas helped faculty conduct assessment.

Reports indicated that assessment is providing an avenue for faculty to discuss and reflect upon student learning for a number of programs/areas. Some readers saw evidence that faculty value assessment and are committed to the work. Some programs/areas have embedded assessment in their regular work process and made connections between assessment and teaching and learning. Multiple reports indicated that they have used results of assessment of program or general education learning outcomes to inform decisions to improve curriculum, teaching, or other aspects of their program or area.

Examples of related comments from readers:

- *I do get a sense that assessment has provided an avenue for discussion and collective reflection on students' learning experiences*
- *A number of reports mentioned the value of assessment discussions among faculty.*
- *Strong commitment from faculty to engage in the assessment process*
- *One of the richest aspects of the reports in my opinion was the description of collaborat[ion] across departments*
- *Some faculty have embedded a practice to discuss assessment during regular department meetings.*
- *[These departments] recognize assessment as a professional commitment to teaching and learning even in light of feeling spread thin*
- *Findings from assessment activities have been used to improve PLOs, course assignments and activities.*
- *Assessment results, predominantly are being used to inform and faculty make those informed decisions fairly clear (even if they are peripheral changes that indirectly impact assessment...*
- *I am pleased to see collaboration and a sense of the link between assessment and teaching and learning work in the teams.*
- *Faculty have actively engaged with the Teaching and Learning Center for support.*
- *The areas that seem to be the most consistently engaged in assessment also have outside influences such as specialized accreditation, strong industry advisory boards, or statewide work.*
- *...they carried out the assessment that was feasible with the time and other projects they had*

Common Challenges

Readers noted that a common theme among the reports was limited time and capacity for assessment work. Challenges include finding time for groups to meet. Some programs/areas report not having enough faculty to effectively conduct assessment because of empty faculty positions, having a small (single Full-time Faculty) program, and/or having difficulty engaging faculty. Other pressing matters compete with program-level or general education assessment for time and attention such as responding to emergencies (e.g. the 2024 cyber-attack), statewide transfer work, and increasing socioemotional challenges faced by students. While some reports indicate that assessment is integrated into regular teaching and learning work, readers also saw indications that some programs/areas view assessment as an overlay of work that is external to their regular work. While many reports indicate the use of assessment results for improvement, the connection between results and improvement is sometimes not clearly indicated.

Examples of related comments from readers:

- *Capacity, engaging associate faculty, staff turnover, and finding time to convene appear to be challenges.*
- *reduction in FTF, transition in FTF after retirements or resignations*
- *In several cases, programs emphasized the small size of their team and/or difficulty in getting faculty to participate- FTF and/or AF*
- *Programs led by a single FTF have some specific challenges in common due to their size, regardless of discipline/department. Programs which span multiple departments have some different challenges.*

- *it seems that, generally, assessment may be viewed as an overlay (or extra "thing to do") as opposed to the foundational underpinning.*
- *Many folks talked about the challenge of integrating new faculty into the work and the feeling of not being able to get their feet under them, especially with ongoing emergencies (ice storm, cyber attack, etc.)*
- *A few programs seemed in a little bit of a rut (one program used this language specifically and it seemed to capture what I saw in other reports).*
- *the challenge of collecting assessment data from different courses, sometimes in different disciplines, and having to manually enter data from a large number of courses.*
- *the connection between assessment work and improvements isn't as clear/direct as I'd like to see*
- *Seem to have inconsistencies in how faculty are completing assessment work, or at least reporting*
- *It is difficult to see how students engage with assessment, given the faculty centric nature of the reports.*
- *a challenge I see is relating this work to the larger goals of the college.*

Assessment Support and College Planning

In addition to reflecting on strengths and challenges that showed up in assessment reports, readers were asked to look for report content that could inform college planning and assessment support. A few themes emerged in reader comments. Readers noted the importance of utilizing the new 2-year reporting cycle to address challenges identified in the reports. Readers hoped to see the new cycle leveraged to provide more time and support for assessment work and to emphasize using results to inform decisions at the program and college levels. Readers made specific suggestions regarding connecting assessment to college planning and mission fulfillment, addressing workload issues, and increasing engagement. Readers also posed questions for consideration and discussion.

Examples of related comments from readers:

- *It will be interesting to see how the two year cycles and providing substantive, scheduled time through in-services for faculty to meet helps with on-going comments about time.*
- *Perhaps some attention to the structures, mechanisms, and PD opportunities that could be provided and leveraged within the 2 year cycle. How might faculty be better supported (by the college) to "integrate the assessment process into their regular teaching and learning work, "effectively engage with/invest time in assessment of student learning, and more intentionally "support students in learning how to learn, how to reflect on their own learning, and how to give feedback on their learning?"*
- *It will be interesting to see if the 2-year cycle results in more use and/or more depth of use (using assessment to inform more intentional and meaningful interventions to improve student learning)*
- *...continuing to build a culture of assessment. How can we create more excitement/engagement around assessment and evidence-based learning? How can these practices be infused into our work so that assessment doesn't feel like a disparate (or Herculean) task?*
- *...ensuring from a high level that their assessment is valued and is not a performative exercise is important. Reiterating that it is a safe space to discuss challenges is also critical.*
- *It seems like the challenges might inform specific support for assessment that could be incorporated into college planning (release time, assessment work for department could count as committee work, additional in-services, etc.).*
- *significant changes to program curriculum driven by the state (MTM, CCN, other), professional accreditation, advisory board or industry input/needs, and other transfer needs... [this work] requires a lot of time, effort, and collaboration and needs to be considered in planning for CQI and faculty workload/work prioritization*

- *Seeing a continuing need for/requests for CTL support for faculty group work aligning assignments and program/gen-ed learning outcomes*
- *Provide a program and incentive for engaging AF in assessment*
- *I'm wondering if there might be an opportunity to partner up areas that only have one FTF at least for discussion and encouragement*
- *Departments are taking it upon themselves (with what appear to be varying degrees of success) to plan ahead for changes in personnel that would impact the assessment process. I'm not sure what the recommendation is...*
- *we continue to see a wide variety of detail and response in the reports. Some write novels and some are just checking boxes... how can we make that form a little easier to read/write in? How do we encourage folks to detail work I am sure is happening at some level?*
- *It's unclear yet how the assessment work will flow into the Teaching and Learning or Other Councils, so that could be an area to work on in terms of informing college planning overall.*
- *How do we hold programs accountable to completing assessment work?*
- *I got a sense of overwhelm in these reports -- how do we do less and get more as a college?*
- *I wonder how much of this is truly workload and how much is related to other factors like prioritization or not feeling confident in how to do assessment?*
- *I...wonder how these reports might be better utilized to show mission fulfillment college-wide.*

Recommendations

Some of the challenges identified in this report review could be addressed, at least in part, by opportunities provided by the two-year reporting cycle that the College initiated in Fall of 2024. One of the effects of moving reporting to every other year, we hope, will be to reduce the overall workload of reporting and thereby to provide space for deeper engagement with the assessment process generally but especially with the process of using assessment results to inform efforts to improve student learning. This shift also speaks to the recommendations the College has received from NWCCU accreditation evaluators, that CCC should work to improve its use of assessment results particularly in general education and at the institutional level.

While the College should endeavor to fully utilize the potential of the two-year CQI cycle, we also recognize that the two-year cycle might not fully address the workload issues that emerged in this report review (and in previous years' reviews). Going forward, assessment reports will be required every other year but assessment is expected to remain a continuous effort. Faculty workload is a student success issue, as an Assessment Committee member articulated very well during our report review discussion: when you have limited time and resources, you default to ways of approaching curriculum and teaching that are not necessarily the best for students, that leave out many students and are not necessarily supported by evidence from literature or from your own assessment. We encourage our colleagues in shared governance and leadership roles to consider new ways that assessment and curriculum work might be organized, structured, and supported to address ongoing workload challenges.

As we work toward improving assessment as a college, a key factor will be to connect the pieces of Continuous Quality Improvement (assessment, unit planning, academic program review, and budget) to one another and, in addition, connecting CQI findings with decision-making processes in shared governance Councils. At both program and college levels, faculty and staff need to be able to request and access allocations of funding and time to implement learning improvement efforts targeted at needs that were surfaced by assessment. We encourage our colleagues to assess how well CQI components, including unit planning, are meeting this need and to make any adjustments as we move forward. Most use-of-assessment projects

that show up in assessment reports don't seem to end up in the unit plans of academic units. What is the reason for this, and is it something that makes sense (perhaps because of the small scale of those reported changes or for another reason) or is this something that should be remedied? Further, is our system set up to adequately support (and encourage) CQI in general education, including cross-departmental general education areas?

Conclusion

We hope that the information and recommendations in this report will help guide discussion and planning toward the goal of supporting meaningful, useful, and sustainable assessment. Academic assessment is a core process in the College's continuous quality improvement cycle and it holds potential to be better utilized to support the College in fulfilling its mission.